

## *Who is Dr. Maria Montessori?.....*

Maria Montessori was, in many ways, ahead of her time. Born in the town of Chiaravalle, in the province of Ancona, Italy, in 1870 she was an active advocate for the rights of the child. After becoming Italy's first woman doctor, her interests turned to the education of children and she began her lifelong pursuit of studying child development. In her medical practice, her clinical observations led her to analyze how children learn, and she concluded that they build themselves from what they find in their environment. Her desire to help children was so strong that in 1906 she gave up both her university chair and her medical practice to work with a group of sixty young children of working parents in the San Lorenzo district of Rome. It was there that she founded the first *Casa dei Bambini*, or "Children's House".

What ultimately became the Montessori method of education developed there, based upon Montessori's scientific observations of these children's almost effortless ability to absorb knowledge from their surroundings, as well as their tireless interest in manipulating materials. Every piece of equipment, every exercise, every method Montessori developed was based on what she observed children to do "naturally", by themselves, unassisted by adults.

Dr. Montessori was nominated three times for the Nobel Peace Prize for her contributions to education and advocacy of the rights of the child. Dr. Montessori believed that a truly educated individual continues learning long after the years spent in the classroom because of inner motivation, a natural curiosity and a love of learning. The aim of the Montessori philosophy is to provide a learning environment that enhances the development of intellectually reflective individuals who are caring and ethical members of the community.

Dr. Maria Montessori died in Noordwijk, Holland, in 1952, but her work lives on through the Association Montessori Internationale, the organization she founded in Amsterdam, Netherlands, in 1929 to carry on her work.

*....And how does her work impact us at  
Mountainview?*

Dr. Montessori's view of the whole child is embraced at Mountainview – we pay attention to “the heart, the hand, and the head”. The classroom environment allows for the child to assist in the care and maintenance of the space and is arranged to allow for maximum independence. The emergence of individual talents and personalities is enjoyed and celebrated. The curriculum has an integrated approach, with the child able to move about the classroom, choosing areas of interest, while at the same time being guided through the basic requirements of the public school curriculum. The teacher creates tasks and activities which allow the child to learn and educate him/herself. Developmentally appropriate materials in the classroom enable the child to take advantage of sensitive periods of growth and skill acquisition. Materials stimulate the child's reasoning and imagination and move from the concrete, sensory world to the realm of the abstract. Personal responsibility is taught and encouraged, allowing children to demonstrate through their actions their understanding of what it means to respect and be a “global citizen”. Our “community” includes the students, the staff, and the parents, and it is expected that we all take responsibility for each other and model through words and actions, Dr. Montessori's view of a peaceful society. At Mountainview, we truly believe that “it takes a village to raise a child”.

